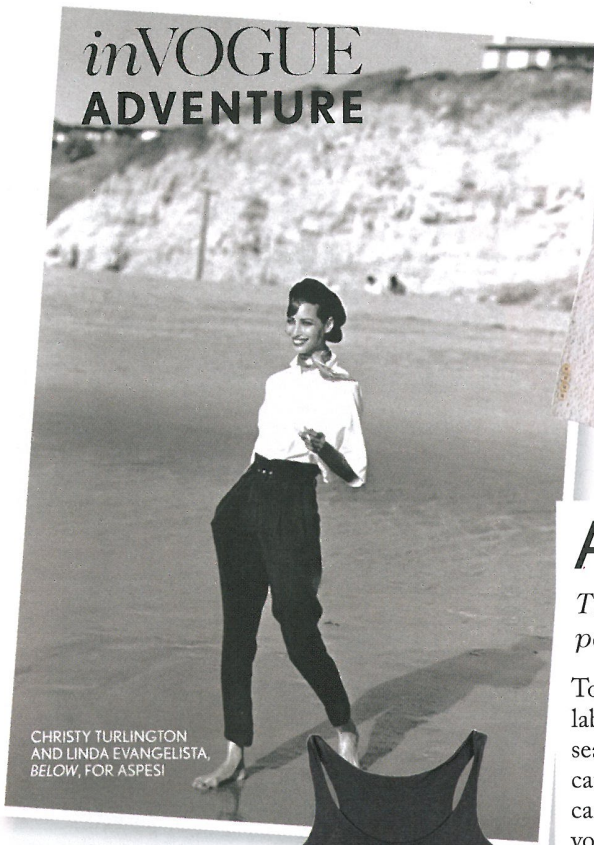


# inVOGUE ADVENTURE



CHRISTY TURLINGTON  
AND LINDA EVANGELISTA,  
BELOW, FOR ASPESI



WOOL-MIX  
COAT, £710

## ASPESI

*The low-key Italian label is perfect for the hip, urban purist*

To fully appreciate this Italian sportswear label, picture a designer who ignores seasonal fashion trends and extravagant catwalk shows, and shuns glossy ad campaigns. But that's Alberto Aspesi for you. The man behind the utilitarian Aspesi label is about as anti-fashion as you can get. And you'd need more than a Swiss Army knife to cut through the air of mystery that continues to surround him.

Until recently, this 43-year-old label was hard to come by outside of northern Italy. Only those in the know seemed able to find it. For most, that involved an annual pre-ski pilgrimage to Biffi in Milan, to stock up on packable padded jackets and other essential outerwear pieces required for the slopes – or any urban stomping ground.

The first flagship only opened in Milan in 2006, with other Italian cities and an outpost in Paris coming next. And, just last September, an e-commerce site (Aspesi.com) was launched. Like most things at Aspesi, it happened without any of the usual fashion hoo-ha.

Luckily, he does have a voice (and an eloquent one at that) in the shape of Lawrence Steele. The American designer – who is perhaps best known for his minimal, eponymous line – first collaborated with Alberto in the mid-Nineties. Today, he is a permanent fixture at the family-run label, having successfully tapped into the brand's rich DNA. He describes his role at Aspesi as one with no official title. One day he could be designing womenswear, the next overseeing production. "No one stands above or below anyone else – it's a very 'non-political' environment, in which Alberto is very much involved," says Steele.

For starters, Alberto is a true fabric maverick, flitting across the globe in search of the most intricate weaves: Harris for



THE INTERIOR OF  
THE MILAN STORE

**ASPESI**



tweed, Ireland for linen, Japan for the super yarns and quantum cottons from which many of his signature shirts are cut.

It all began with a shirt range back in 1969. By the late Seventies, Aspesi had become a full-scale ready-to-wear label. A decade later, technical sportswear, made from nylon, down linings and coated cotton, was added. When the Paninaro claimed the padded jacket as its official street uniform, Aspesi was on a roll.

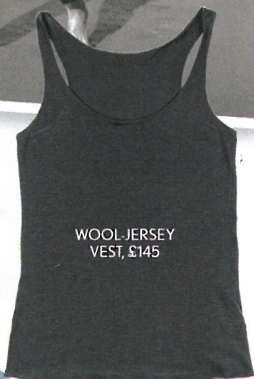
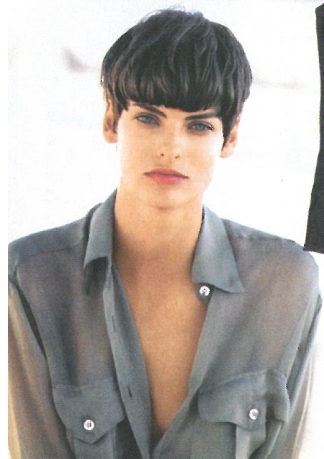
Today you are more likely to see young Italian women sporting the popular Minnie, a quilted nylon gilet, zipping around town on scooters. Elsewhere, low-waist chinos and military-inspired day jackets seem to tick many a purist's box.

## *Alberto flits across the globe in search of intricate weaves*

But here's the thing. While other fashion houses work flat out to produce seasonal trends, Aspesi doesn't. Core pieces tend to stay the same, with the only notable changes occurring in colour and, of late, print. "The great thing about Aspesi is you can find the same item you bought years ago, but it will have evolved ever so slightly," says Steele.

At the retail hub on Milan's Via Montenapoleone, clothes hang in a laid-back, scrambled kind of way against a backdrop of steel girders, yellow walls, couches and rugs. Here, an affluent slice of Milanese society (families mainly) come to shop, drink coffee and hang out in the open-air courtyard restaurant.

"Aspesi is similar to Milan," says Steele. "You don't really get it until you visit its hidden courtyards and offbeat corners. Then you get this wonderful sense that there is something really beautiful and ultimately unique going on." *Lucie Muir*



WOOL-JERSEY  
VEST, £145



COTTON  
CHINOS,  
£140



WOOL DRESS,  
£390

ASPESI'S S/S '94 NATIVE  
AMERICANS CAMPAIGN

